

Massachusetts Textile Stakeholders Summit

October 1, 2015, MassDEP, Boston, MA

Minutes

Thank you to the event sponsors:

**Bay State Textiles for providing morning refreshments and
Recycle That for providing lunch!**

9:30 - Welcome and Overview of Day

Nancy Seidman, Assistant Commissioner, MassDEP

- MassDEP signed Memorandum of Understanding with Secondary Materials and Recycled Textiles Association (SMART) and Council for Textile Recycling (CTR) to promote textile recovery to general public.
- Diverting textiles from disposal will help Massachusetts meet Solid Waste Master Plan goal of reducing waste by 2 million tons per year by 2020.

Brooke Nash, Branch Chief, Municipal Waste Reduction

- Why Is MassDEP interested in textile recovery?
- About 230,000 tons of textiles disposed annually in Massachusetts landfills and incinerators.
- 15% of used textiles are donated or diverted; 85% get thrown away.
- Textiles are ideal recyclable – market demand, good collection infrastructure, not hazardous, bulky, difficult to handle, or putrescible.
- All households generate unwanted textiles.
- The problem: the public doesn't know that dry, clean clothing, footwear and household textiles can be donated in any condition.
- Local recycling coordinators are key to getting message to residents: donate all textiles; don't judge their value.
- Outreach with help of SMART and charities has resulted in growth of textile collections at municipal transfer stations and schools over last 4 years, but there is still much work to do.
- Goal of today's meeting: Reinvigorate textile recovery message, inform the public, set goals for textile recovery.
- Municipalities, for profit and non-profit collectors, charities, fiber converters, wiping cloth manufacturers can all work together. There is much low-hanging fruit; the biggest competition is the trash can.

9:45 - Textile Recovery: The Big Picture

The Lifecycle of Textiles - Jackie King, Exec Dir, SMART (Secondary Materials & Recycled Textiles Assn)

81 lbs of textiles (clothing, sheets, towels, shoes, purses) per person gets thrown away annually. About 20% of what's donated to thrift stores/charities is sold to their customers. The rest goes to brokers, and of that, around 45 % is sold as usable clothing overseas; 35 % is made into wiping rags, and 20 % is ground up for fiber (carpet backing, insulation, etc).

- SMART offers many resources to help get message out and encourage the public to donate all of their used textiles.
- Graphics for the banners are available the SMART website: www.smartasn.org
- Municipalities can link to SMART's information and resources on their websites
- Consumers /Advocates: <http://www.smartasn.org/consumers/index.cfm> - Lifecycle of Rags flyer
- Educators and Kids: <http://www.smartasn.org/educators-kids/index.cfm>
- A variety of informational videos on the SMART website: <http://www.smartasn.org/about/videos.cfm>

The Role of Charities - Jason Marshall, VP Retail Operations, Morgan Memorial Goodwill Industries

- Morgan Memorial Goodwill Industries (Boston, MA) was started in 1895; it's the oldest of 165 Goodwill organizations in U.S. Its territory is Worcester to Boston, Cape Cod to New Hampshire in eastern Mass.
- Each Goodwill uses revenue earned through sale of donated items to provide job training and employment to individuals with barriers to employment. 87 cents of every dollar generated in GW thrift stores goes to job training and employment.
- They operate 10 retail stores and coordinate with 18 recycling centers and Transfer Stations in Eastern and Central MA.

- Textile collections increased from 20 million lbs in 2011 to 23.5 million lbs last year. This year's goal: 25 million lbs.
- Plan to open 6-8 new retail thrift stores within next few years; have hired community donation specialists to drive additional donations. 35,000 donors per store are needed each year.
- Since 2012, when MassDEP started textile outreach, they've grown from 11 Attended Donation Centers (ADCs) to 14 ADCs
- The #1 driver for donors is convenience.
- Started a residential computer donation program with DELL, refurbishing and reselling computers through their stores 10 retail stores

Textile Markets: The Long View - Larry Groipen, President, ERC Wiping Products, Lynn, MA.

- ERC- cuts cotton up into wiping cloths; 100-125 shipments per day to customers; also makes wiping rags from off-spec fabrics; they collect sheets, towels, etc from hotels, hospitals.
- Markets: China has big impact: growing economy, more consumption, buying raw material from Africa and developing nations with dollars, and they use the dollars to buy used clothing. Now that China's economy has slowed down, developing nations don't have the dollars to buy used clothes anymore. Strong dollar works against reused clothing sales.
- Take the long view: there are always peaks and valleys in the recycling business (textiles and all secondary materials). More supply than needed in warehouses now, so prices are soft.
- But the message remains: "Still be as committed as you were before".
- Every pound kept out of disposal facilities saves money in tip fees, and is a great thing for the environment.

For-Profit Collector's Perspective - Paul Curry, Bay State Textiles

- Not all doom and gloom, labor costs in China will go up, things go in cycles.
- In 2011, kicked off textile recycling in MA. serving municipalities DPW's. Tried a pilot textiles program with City of Quincy schools; trailers too big for school yards.
- Big breakthrough: partnership with Weymouth Public Schools: a collection box in every schoolyard; Weymouth School District cross-brands and drives the program. Cross-branding the program is key!
- Bay State now services 46 school districts; 356 schools participate from 130 municipalities in MA and CT.
- Paul exports all textiles.
- China going to flood the market with used textiles in developed countries- thinks won't work because quality is worse than the reused clothes from the U.S.

Q & A and Discussion:

Ed Stubin - TransAmerica, noted that Primark is the future of fashion and the clothing industry in America- "fast fashion"; \$7 sweaters. More clothing is being produced today in the world than ever before, so it will become a higher percentage of the waste stream. Need to consider textile recycling worldwide in future. Population growth is flat in the industrial world, shooting up in the nonindustrial world, that's the market for this material (used clothing). Get in front of the curve. They deliver clothing around the world to the poorest people for the cost of a postage stamp.

10:30 - Outreach Initiatives to Increase Textile Donations

Rhode Island Textile Campaign: Sarah Reeves, RI Resource Recovery Corp., Dir. of Public Policy, Programs and Planning. <http://ritextiles.org> (See: [RIRRC PowerPoint presentation](#))

- RI Resource Recovery, a quasi-public agency, operates the landfill and MRF for Rhode Island.
- They got on textiles train after attending NERC conference on textiles in spring 2014.
- Textiles cause fires in MRF machinery, wrap up equipment, need to get out of the MRF and landfill. They are heavy and disposal is based on weight.
- They identified 8 major recycling donation partners (mix of charity & for-profits) to work with
- Primary goal: educate people about the difference between usable and wearable
- How to donate them-no plastic bags for recycling (except for textiles and shredded papers).
- Didn't want it included with recycle stream. Needed to make it a standalone program.
- They went "image heavy" with their outreach campaign.

- Developed standardized bin decal: “Wondering what to do with ratty old clothes and textiles? This is where they belong” (with photos of 8 donation bins from 8 collectors). Same content on their website with hyperlinks to each textile collection organization. This allows each collector to provide their own message on their website.
- Communication goals - increase awareness, alleviate guilt of disposing textiles, put bad with good together, don’t need to separate them.
- Emphasize outcomes - support local charity, local bins fine, it’s all good, reduces tipping fees, extend afterlife of household textiles.
- Social media is critical- “if you’re scared of using it, get over it!”; they use 3 social media platforms: FB (main) Twitter, YouTube; adding Instagram (image-heavy)
- “Clean, dry, and odorless” (they added odorless because their partners identified that as important)
- People may worry about burden to thrift store workers to sort items.
- When public asks thrift store staff, they are sometimes told “No, don’t want unwearable items”
- Need to verify acceptance protocol with partners and get the message trickled down to their staff. It can be a struggle to get thrift stores on board with the message.
- RIRRC will share artwork and graphics with anyone, so long as they credit RIRRC.

ReClothe NY/NYSAR Campaign - Melissa Young- Syracuse University, Center for Sustainable Community Solutions <http://www.nysar3.org/page/re-clothe-ny-78.html>

- NSYAR is nonprofit state recycling organization for New York.
- NYSAR convened textile summit in April 2014 with state/regional/local government, industry, and nonprofits). They hold their second summit Oct 2, 2015 in Syracuse.
- 1.4 billion lbs per year textiles disposed in NY with \$200 million value potential
- 150 people came, discussed issues, strategies, public, private, municipalities, educators, students, subgroups formed at mtg
- Public relations and communication identified as top priority.
- Questions: How to brand, How to educate
- How to collect and support members/municipalities
- SMART/ Council for Textile Recycling (CTR) helped develop media toolkit and searchable online database of textile drop off locations with NY DEC help.
- Adopted slogan “ReClothe New York” and logo for campaign.
- Created extensive [website](http://www.nysar3.org/page/re-clothe-ny-78.html) with many tools, resources, drop-off/donation database.
- Facebook page: asked for “textile tales” to be posted- put value to the materials
- Nov 15, 2014 – ribbon cutting in Cooperstown to kick off campaign.
- Municipalities needed help getting support for their programs, so they developed [pledge](#) for municipalities to sign at kick off on America Recycles Day.
- Collection events after America Recycles Day: over 100,000 lbs of textiles collected.
- Held webinars with SMART/CTR to train municipal coordinators to use Media/Outreach Toolkit
- 56 media placements plus many online media placements
- Partners- SMART/ CTR
 - Broad spectrum of stakeholders
 - Local government passed resolutions in support of NSYAR Textile Campaign
- Challenges
 - How to keep momentum going after initial launch
 - How to promote consistency among partners (concurrence on same standards of acceptability, metrics)
 - Challenging market conditions
- What’s next:
 - expand collection to more communities
 - create markets in NY; jobs creation
 - look at legislation on bin labeling and clothing labeling.
 - engage the fashion design and retailer sector; explore labeling on clothes promoting textile donations/recovery.

11:15 *Crafting a Universal Message: A Facilitated Discussion*

Brooke Nash opened discussion about need for a consistent message to the public about textile recycling and made following points:

- Many parallels in the textile recycling to traditional bottle can and paper recycling programs.
- Consistency is key (changing rules makes recycling confusing); turning on and off the faucet doesn't build trust with the public; that means sticking with collection programs thru soft markets (e.g. bulky rigid plastics market volatility; but keep programs in place even during down markets is critical).
- Building trust with public on what we want them to donate will insure long term stable supply of post-consumer textiles, the same as with paper, cans, bottles. Processors and end-users need steady, consistent supply; both suppliers (municipalities/residents) and processors (MRFs or charities/textile collectors/processors) must be in it for long term, not just when markets are strong.
- The simpler the better, as long as it conveys the desired action
- Avoiding use of the phrase "recycle textiles" is imperative because public equates "recycling" with putting household items in recycling bins. Textiles mixed with cans, bottles, paper are a contaminant in recycling stream; result is costly down-time and extra sorting at MRFs that separate cans/bottles/paper into separate, marketable commodities.
- The more universal the message, the better (so that textile recovery means the same thing in Seekonk as it does in Marlborough).
- Goal: textiles should be diverted from trash at the same rates as paper, cans and bottles
- Rhode Island and New York have developed messaging models; Massachusetts will build on their successes; not reinvent the wheel.
- MassDEP signed Memorandum of Understanding with SMART and CTR for a statewide messaging and outreach campaign on textile recovery (similar to NY's MOU with SMART).
- MassDEP is asking all textile stakeholders for "buy-in" and support on common message to general public
- MassDEP may invest funds in an ad campaign at some point (a la Rhode Island) but for now, the campaign will mimic NY's (focus on providing tools to municipalities to publicize/promote textile recycling to general public and in school community).
- MassDEP offering new incentive to municipalities to leverage participation in textile campaign. The [Recycling Dividends Program](#) (RDP) will include a BONUS POINT for specific actions (delineated by MassDEP) to promote textile recycling. Bonus point value ranges from \$200 (smallest municipalities) to \$10,000 for largest municipality (Boston). Municipalities have until June 2016 to qualify for bonus point.
- MassDEP's working slogan for outreach campaign - ***Worn or Torn, Donate it All*** Feedback/discussion on this:
 - "Donate" – problem with not considering collection bins as "donations;" emphasizes value of clothing; implies torn, worn not recoverable;
 - "Recovery" – NY uses this term (instead of recycle) to refer to recycling/donation/reuse
 - "Don't Toss Textiles" proposed by Ed Hsieh, MassRecycle; use social media to promote
 - Don't throw it out is a very important message
 - "Dropoff" implies other mattresses, etc.
 - Other suggestions in lieu of donate: "repurpose", "contribute", "recover", "reuse"
 - "We're Too Good for the Trash"; "Don't Toss Textiles – Recover for Reuse"; "Clean Your Closet"; "Donate, Don't Judge"
 - Bay State Textiles uses "Donate and Recycle" on boxes; starting to put on "Reuse"
 - Giving your Unwanted Clothing a New Life (Bag 2 School uses this slogan)
 - Another challenge: conveying the universe off acceptable items (not just clothing and shoes): "Clothing, Shoes, Household Linens"
 - RI wanted to get away from "clothing"
 - "If you can wear it, sleep on it or dry yourself off with it" Matt Libby's description

Collecting Data/Measuring Progress/Setting a Massachusetts Recovery Goal:

Brooke emphasized importance of benchmarking progress, documenting success. This would entail:

- Establish baseline data on textile collection amounts
- About 2/3 of Mass municipalities already report textile collection tonnage to [MassDEP on annual solid waste/recycling survey](#). This typically includes tonnage collected at municipal facilities (i.e. not donation boxes on private property).
- Identify ways to measure progress (number of collection sites; weight of material, other?)
- What is best way to collect data from industry?
- Would textile collectors would be willing to report to MassDEP annually on amount of textiles collected if data were aggregated and not published with names of reporters linked to tonnage?
- Bay State already reports to municipal customers.
- Some report it's difficult to get collectors to report (Rhode Island).
- Connect reporting to regulating boxes (Paul)
- If MassDEP is gathering data from all collectors, those present did not have a problem providing.
- If box is on city property, small companies don't have #'s, requiring it would be problematic (Paulie, Cambridge)
- Planet Aid reports to municipalities for all their boxes
- Susan Cascino, City of Boston: would DEP allow municipalities to count textile tonnage collected at private, non-municipal sites. Brooke believes this is legitimate and an important part of measuring progress.

Mass Statewide Textile Recovery Campaign, Brooke Nash, MassDEP, Jackie King, SMART

SMART/CRT and MassDEP Memorandum of Understanding to promote textile recycling. MassDEP will be able to fund production of collateral materials and outreach tools.

See ["Worn or Torn, Donate it All: Massachusetts Textile Recovery Campaign" Powerpoint presentation](#).

- SMART contracted with Fallston Group developed PR and Media Tool kit for municipal recycling coordinators
- Fallston Group will conduct webinar in 2016 for Mass municipalities on using the toolkit, including:
 - Targeted events
 - Operational manual
 - Tracking
 - Press Release
- Re-TRAC Directory – MassDEP is populating an online directory where public can search for to textile donation sites (and other materials).
- Brooke asked textile collectors to submit their collection locations to MassDEP for inclusion by emailing ann.mcgovern@state.ma.us

School-Based Textile Collection Programs; Lorinda Visnick, Beverly Public Schools

See [School Program PowerPoint presentations](#). (Scroll to page 5-11)

- Beverly, MA population 45,000.
- Began textile collection program based on Weymouth's success. Beverly already had mandatory bottles papers and cans recycling policy.
- School-based collections using Green Teams, recycle clubs
- Beverly Bootstraps- local nonprofit aiding the needy on the North Shore. Didn't want to negatively impact them with their school textile collection program.
- Excellent video on YouTube
- Raised \$15K
- Saved \$11.5K tipping fees to City
- Recovery approximately 1.5 T/ week

- Jackson Fernandes, Planet Aid, noted that in PAYT communities, trash in their drop boxes goes up

Betsy Harris, Weymouth Public Schools

See [School Program PowerPoint presentations](#) (scroll to page 12)

- Weymouth, MA population 55,000; 7,000 students; 12 Schools, 1,200 employees;
- Weymouth's recycling wasn't good.
- Bay State textiles has great curriculum on their website
- Weymouth schools have been doing the textile recycling program for 5 years
- Did a mailing to all 17K HH funded by Bay State Textiles
- Saves DPW \$100K/year with this program
- Results over 5 years:
 - \$26,567.10 earned
 - 206T diverted (= 103 elephants)
 - 411, 145 lbs collected
 - No complaints from schools

Aaron Curran, Bag 2 School, North America operation

See [School Program PowerPoint presentations](#) (pages 1-4)

- Going into 6th year of school textile recycling
- Founded in 2001
- In 10 countries
- 25K schools/ year
- 50,000,000 lbs textiles/ year
- Event based program- campaigns run multiple times per year (one month, one week, day)
- Book collection dates in advance (1-2 mos) and a special clothing drive is coordinated
- Help promote events, education
- Benefits- Concentrated focus, high student and school engagement
- Fun for kids/educational
- Events get embedded in school calendar and recur annually
- Free fundraising – Bag 2 School pays municipalities \$200/ ton
- They take all textiles (not hard plastics, toys, etc.)

Matt Libby, Recycle That- MA and Southern, NH

- Works with schools and other nonprofits; places collection containers
- Fundraising programs for schools
- Only works with schools that want the program, doesn't require entire district to participate
- Keep containers neat and clean - very important
- Also takes books, CDs, household goods, toys, and sporting goods
- Provides containers for free (like Bay State and Planet Aid)

Regulating Donation Bins

Jackie King, SMART developed a [Code of Conduct](#) to set basic standards for best practices:

- Name and address of bin owner; Disclose charity partner or say if for profit
- Collect on regular basis and maintain area;
- Have agreement with property owner and abide by all laws (permits)
- NY State was going to ban all donation bins; they took SMART's ordinance to develop legislation, passed in July 2015.
- SMART can provide guidance to municipalities on ordinance
- Better to have reasonable regulations, than to ban it outright and have no collection bins

Matt Libby, Recycle That

- Recycle That supports bin regulations that promote responsibility to community. When one container looks bad, they all look bad.
- A standardized bin decal (as in Rhode Island's program) serves as a certification to the public about official v. fly by night operation. A universal message and contact phone number (municipality?) enables the municipality to keep track of who has bins where.

- City of Worcester has fee plan - \$50/bin
- Better to have bins in different locations than to have multiple companies' bins in same locations. Single bins in more locations increases convenience to public and accountability.
- Worcester says can only have certain number of bins per location. With multiple bins in one location, the mess gets moved from one to the other. With unique locations, the mess is the mess and belongs to that company to take care of.
- Municipalities can enforce ordinances by making them pull the bin and contact property owner to fine them if not well managed

Wrap up/Next Steps – Brooke Nash, MassDEP

- Didn't hear any objections to state going forth spreading the message that all materials should be "recovered" (worn, torn, stained, dry, odorless, not greasy).
- MassDEP will provide links to new outreach and promotional materials as they are developed.

Meeting adjourned at 2:30 pm (30 minutes behind schedule!).

POSTSCRIPT: MassDEP was not able to launch to the Textile Recovery Campaign on America Recycles Day (Nov 15, 2015), as planned. We will instead do a "soft-launch" in December with a press release that ties in holiday giving with "making room for new, donating the old or the new sweater from grandma that just isn't your style!" The hard launch will be in spring 2016, to coincide with Earth Day.